

## LAPS/EN 2600 6.0 SU: INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING

### TERM, TIME AND LOCATION:

Summer 2019

Mon. & Thurs. 4-7pm

VH 3017

### COURSE DIRECTOR:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Jennifer Duncan  
OFFICE: 301C Stong (subject to change)  
EMAIL: [jinx.duncan@sympatico.ca](mailto:jinx.duncan@sympatico.ca)  
OFFICE HOURS: flexible; by appointment only (arrange by email)

### EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION:

#### **ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE**

Each week there will be two three-hour writing studio workshops that involve lectures, discussions of readings, in-class exercises and critiques. These classes are not like academic tutorials where the focus is on review of lectures and readings; they are like theatre or visual art studios in which much of the coursework happens in activities performed in-class. Thus attendance and preparedness are crucial for the writing studios to fulfill their purpose. There is no way to make up many of these activities if you miss class or are not prepared to participate. Students are expected to come promptly to class having done the reading and writing assignments.

#### **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the writing of poetry and fiction through the practices that comprise the writing lives of published authors. It is designed to familiarize students with the literary traditions and possibilities of these forms, to help them explore creative reading/writing/editing processes, and to discover their talents. As the main focus of these studios is on students developing their own *literary* writing, and not *genre* writing, instruction is not formulaic but requires that students, through a community of practice and engagement with the writing life, work actively and independently to make connections between terminology, readings, lectures, and their own creative processes. Readings are to be done before writing the weekly assignment so that techniques, devices and approaches can be discovered. Students are expected to improve and polish their work and to develop an appreciation for, and understanding of, different approaches to literary writing. The main premise of this course is that words are transformative and it is hoped that students will approach this experience with openness, humility, ability to work through the frustration of a challenge and willingness to take risks so that they may transform themselves into emerging artists of the written word.

“A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us.” – Franz Kafka

“Make it new.” – Ezra Pound

## COURSE TEXTS

Course Kit

Students are also responsible for photocopying their works for critiques

## EVALUATION

- 20% Participation (including discussing readings, critiquing student work, performing in-class and at-home exercises)
- 40% Writing Assignments within established deadlines:
  - 10% Third and First Person Narratives
  - 10% Poetry Set #1 (portrait, object and glosa poems)
  - 10% Short Story (8-12 pages)
  - 10% Poetry Set #2 (haiku, sonnet/villanelle, concrete/prose poems)
- 10% Tests: Demonstration of knowledge of terms and readings (5% each for Mid-Term and Final)
- 30% Final Portfolio: 15-20 pages; this should include selected revised works and, if you wish, some new works. At least 2/3 of the portfolio should be revisions of course work. As well, include a letter of self-evaluation (250-500 words) that will introduce your portfolio and illustrate your critical concerns.

Regarding due dates: the penalty for work submitted beyond the assigned due date is a deduction of one full grade per week or part thereof. Assignments will not be accepted by email. Students must complete ALL course requirements in order to receive a passing grade. Submitted work must be properly **labelled** with assignment or exercise number and name, individual title, and student's name. **Prose is to be double-spaced, poetry single-spaced.**

ANY USE OF ANOTHER PERSON'S WORK, WHETHER IT IS IN PRINT OR ELECTRONIC FORM, WITHOUT PROPER CITATION CONSTITUTES PLAGIARISM AND WILL LEAD TO CHARGES OF A BREACH OF ACADEMIC HONESTY. Please see the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty at:  
<http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/legislation/senate/acadhonesty.htm>

### Grading, Assignment Submission, Lateness Penalties, and Missed Tests

*Grading:* The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.).

(For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar.

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents):

[http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate\\_cte\\_main\\_pages/ccas.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm)

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity Website
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation

**Note:** The final date to drop the course without academic penalty is **June 28, 2019.**

## SYLLABUS

- Apr 29** Introduction to the Course  
In-class writing exercises (this applies to every class)
- May 2** The Writer's Process  
Discussion of writers and finding subjects; each student brings a meaningful object concealed in a paper bag and a found photograph
- May 6** Close Reading  
Reading: Elizabeth Tallent "No One Is a Mystery"  
Walk Description Exercise due in class (for instructor feedback)  
Each student brings an example of literary fiction writing they consider to be excellent
- May 9** Beginning and Ending  
Each student brings examples of strong openings and closings (literary fiction)  
Reading: Clark Blaise, "To Begin, To Begin" and "On Ending Stories"
- May 13** Drawing from Life  
Still Life and Character Sketch Exercises (in class)  
Reading: Jhumpa Lahiri "Interpreter of Maladies"
- May 16** Point of View I  
Small Group Critiques: First Person Narration Draft due (2-4 pages; 4 copies)  
Reading: Jamaica Kincaid "Girl"; Tobias Wolff "Powder" (online: [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/pdf/2014/261077.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/pdf/2014/261077.pdf))
- May 20** Point of View II  
Revision: revising Third Person Narration as First Person  
Reading: Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"; David Foster Wallace "Good People" (online: New Yorker website)
- May 23** What Is Poetry and How Do We Write It?  
Linebreak and Rhyme Exercises in class  
**Assignment #1: Third and First Person Narration due in class for grading**  
Reading: Karen Solie "Self Portrait in a Series of Professional Evaluations"; Dionne Brand "Blues Spiritual for Mammy Prater"; Billy-Ray Belcourt "Grief After Grief After Grief After Grief" (online: [nakinisowin.wordpress.com](http://nakinisowin.wordpress.com))
- May 27** Metaphor and Symbolization  
Metaphor Exercises in class  
Portrait Poem (draft) due for small group critiques (3 copies)  
Reading: Roo Borson, "Blackberries"; Mark Doty "Tiara"; Naomi Shihab Nye "The Small Vases From Hebron"; Cathy Song "Girl Powdering Her Neck"

- May 30** The Anxiety of Influence: Poetry  
Object Poem draft due  
Bring 4 consecutive lines of a published poem for writing the Glosa  
Practice Critique  
Reading: P.K. Page "Alone"
- June 3** Poetry Critique: full class critique of poems from Poetry Set #1  
Bring copies for the whole class of **one** of your poems (portrait, object or glosa)
- June 6** **Mid-Term Test**  
**Due: Assignment #2: Poetry Set #1**
- June 10** **READING WEEK**
- June 13** **READING WEEK**
- June 17** Ways of Looking at Short Stories  
Exercise: Secrets and Confessions  
Reading: Angela Carter, "The Werewolf"; Robert Zend, "The Key"  
Due: Short Story Draft for small group feedback
- June 20** Subtlety and Subtext  
Reading (in class): Ngozi Adichie "A Private Experience"  
**Assignment #3: Short Story due** (copied for full class critique)
- June 24** Voice and Telling  
Reading (in class): Sandra Cisneros "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn";  
Thomas King "One Good Story, That One"
- June 27** Critiquing Short Fiction: Group A
- July 1** Critiquing Short Fiction: Group B
- July 4** Haiku and Renga  
Exercises: haiku and renga  
Reading: from Lonnie Hull DuPont *Footprints in the Snow*
- July 8** Traditional Fixed Form Poetry  
Exercises: Meter and Scansion  
Reading: Shakespeare Sonnet 55; Wendy Cope "Sonnet"; Claude McKay "The Lynching"; Phyllis Webb "Poetics Against the Angel of Death"; Dylan Thomas "Do Not Go Gently Into That Good Night"; Elizabeth Bishop "One Art"; John Yau "Chinese Villanelle"
- July 11** Sonnet and Villanelle  
Exercises: Sonnet and Villanelle

- July 15** Contemporary Forms: Concrete and Prose Poems  
Readings: Susan Holbrook "Poem Discussion #7"; Kay Boyle "Summer";  
Czeslaw Milosz "Esse"; Daphne Marlatt "kore"; Joy Harjo "This Land Is a Poem";  
Christian Bök "Chapter E"
- July 18** Clichés  
Exercises: cliché metaphors, familiar figures
- July 22** The Art of Revision  
Test and Portfolio Preparation  
**Assignment #4: Poetry Set #2 due**
- July 25** **Final Test**  
Portfolio Preparation
- July 29** **Portfolio Due: NO LATE PORTFOLIOS CAN BE ACCEPTED**

## GUIDELINES FOR CRITIQUE

1. We will always begin with positive statements about what IS working before discussing what might not be working.
2. We will strive to find cultural referents that relate to the work, placing it within existing literary traditions and theoretical contexts.
3. We will view the piece by understanding what the piece is intending to be, not by imposing our own aesthetic on it.
4. We will not make personal comments about the writer. Our comments will be restricted to the piece itself.
5. We will not just say something isn't working. We will explain WHY we don't think it is working and WHAT the specific problems are.
6. We will trust each other to produce the most constructive feedback, giving it with thoughtful compassion and receiving it with an open mind.
7. We will share our personal reactions to the work as a way of understanding differences in aesthetics, world views, etc, without making value judgements. We will be respectful of differences even as we disagree.
8. We will celebrate mistakes that teach us as well as clear successes.
9. We are committed to building trust with each other so that we can authentically and spontaneously express ourselves.
10. We will begin every class with a circle and check-in.